

Appendix 1 Draft Affordable Housing Policy

Policy xx Affordable Housing

Requirements and Thresholds

- (1) Delivery of genuinely affordable housing is a key priority of the Local Plan. In view of the identified pressing need for affordable housing in the District, all new development resulting in a net gain of one or more dwellings will be expected to contribute to the provision of affordable housing through providing at least:
 - a) 40% of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing for rent (by net additional unit), **and**
 - b) An additional 10% of the total number of dwellings as dwellings available for affordable home ownership on developments delivering 10 or more dwellings, except where an exemption applies under paragraph 64 of the NPPF.
 - c) 4% of affordable housing meeting the Building Regulations M4(3) standard (wheelchair user dwellings) as per the requirements of Policy xx on Accessible and Adaptable dwellings.
- (2) In calculating the percentage of affordable units to be provided as part of a development scheme, the affordable housing requirement will normally be 'rounded up' to the nearest whole number.
- (3) Where development would affect existing affordable dwellings, permission will only be granted where this would not result in a net loss of affordable housing, and where the proposed tenure mix would meet affordable housing needs of the community.

Rural Exception Sites

- (4) Small-scale proposals delivering 100% affordable housing in perpetuity within and immediately adjacent to the village core areas of Bedmond and Sarratt may be supported within the Green Belt where these are evidenced to provide affordable housing to meet identified local community needs. A minor degree of market housing may be acceptable where it is required to support the delivery of affordable housing on the site.

Affordability and Tenure

- (5) The tenure split of affordable housing on all sites must prioritise forms of affordable housing which are genuinely affordable for those in need and which will meet the most acute needs for affordable housing in the District. As a guide, this means providing:
 - a) Affordable housing for rent

- 80% of the affordable housing for rent as Social Rent,
 - 20% of the affordable housing for rent as Affordable Rent,
- b) Affordable home ownership
- 10% of all dwellings on sites delivering 10 or more dwellings as dwellings for affordable home ownership, except where an exemption applies under paragraph 64 of the NPPF.

(6) Affordable housing should reflect the mix of sizes and types required in the District as identified through Policy xx Housing Mix and the Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) (2019) and subsequent updates.

Mode of Affordable Housing Provision

(7) In most cases, affordable housing provision should be made on site, however on small sites delivering between one and nine dwellings, contribution to affordable housing may be through commuted payments. Such payments will be broadly equivalent in value to on-site provision of affordable housing for rent, but may vary depending on site circumstances and viability. Payments will fund the development of affordable housing on other sites within the District.

(8) To ensure community cohesion and good design, affordable homes must be fully integrated in the design of the overall scheme, being physically and visually indistinguishable from market units and dispersed across the site in clusters appropriate to the size and scale of the development. Designs resulting in high maintenance or service charges should be avoided.

Delivery

(9) Affordable housing requirements within Policy xx Affordable Housing have been determined on the basis of viability and site-specific viability information seeking to justify an alternative level or mix of affordable housing will therefore only be accepted in exceptional cases. Viability assessments should be undertaken in accordance with the recommended approach set out in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs, and will be made publicly available.

(10) Where a reduction in affordable housing is justified, the Council will seek to secure the preferred tenure split as a priority over a potentially higher total percentage of affordable housing which would not be consistent with meeting priority needs. Such proposals will also be subject to detailed review mechanisms throughout the period up to full completion of the development, including an advanced stage review mechanism.

(11) Where developments would trigger affordable housing requirements, application of the Vacant Building Credit will only be appropriate in demonstrated exceptional circumstances, and where a proposal would meet all of the following criteria:

- a) It is clearly demonstrated that the site would otherwise not come forward for any form of redevelopment at any point over the medium to long-term;
- b) All buildings within the site boundary are vacant at the time the application is submitted;
- c) There are no extant or recently expired permissions on the site for any proposed use class;
- d) The proposal does not involve the loss of any capacity to meet other development needs from a site allocated for non-housing development; and
- e) The building has not been made vacant for the sole purpose of redevelopment, evidenced by provision of marketing and vacancy evidence for a continuous period of five years (up to the point of submission of an application).